

Legislation Text

File #: 18-06, **Version:** 1

A RESOLUTION supporting efforts for sanitation and hygiene infrastructure for homeless and unsheltered populations.

WHEREAS, insufficient shelter, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure can lead to the spread of infectious diseases, and

WHEREAS, diseases associated with hepatitis A or diarrhea can be transmitted through ingestion of food or water that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person, and

WHEREAS, diseases can be transmitted between those who do not have access to clean water and hygiene facilities including unsheltered individuals and other vulnerable populations in Seattle and King County, and

WHEREAS, exposure to and consumption of contaminated food and water can infect persons both sheltered and unsheltered, and

WHEREAS, the 2017 Point-in-Time Count counted 11,643 people experiencing homelessness in Seattle and King County, with 5,485 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in abandoned buildings, vehicles and tents, and living on the street, and

WHEREAS, enhanced shelters with lower barriers serve more individuals who have higher behavioral health needs and housing barriers than basic shelter, and can provide hygiene services during extended or daytime hours, and

WHEREAS, unsheltered homeless individuals in the absence of appropriate and available shelter and hygiene services disproportionately face adverse effects of public health risks associated with sleeping outside and infrequent showering and laundering clothing, such as body lice, fleas, head lice, scabies and other

ectoparasite infestations and bacterial skin infections, and

WHEREAS, sleeping outside and irregular showering and clothing laundering are known risk factors for the increased prevalence of scabies and body lice, and body lice can transmit vector-borne infectious agents that pose serious, long term health consequences for adults, and

WHEREAS, reduced hygiene is a risk factor for bacterial skin infections, including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (known as MRSA) and Group A streptococcal infection, that are transmitted in crowded environments through close personal contact, particularly among vulnerable populations such as the urban poor, injection drug users and other marginalized persons, and

WHEREAS, King County is experiencing a Group A streptococcal infection outbreak that is particularly affecting those experiencing homelessness and injection drug users, and

WHEREAS, additional hygiene resources for people who are homeless are needed in all cities and unincorporated areas across King County, and

WHEREAS, Public Health - Seattle & King County works to protect and improve the health and well-being of all people in King County and reduce the spread of diseases;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Health of King County:

A. The Board of Health supports the implementation of a system for sanitation and hygiene infrastructure for homeless and unsheltered populations and calls upon governments and service providers to add publicly accessible hygiene facilities in cities and unincorporated areas across King County.

B. The Board of Health supports and promotes additional investments by governments and service providers in handwashing, toilet and shower facilities for people who are experiencing homelessness as well as facilities available to the public at large in cities and unincorporated areas across King County.